

THE LIBRARY ASSISTANT

THE OFFICIAL JOURNAL OF THE ASSOCIATION OF
ASSISTANT LIBRARIANS
(Section of the Library Association)

HON. EDITOR: W. B. STEVENSON
(Hornsey Public Libraries)

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Editorial

A SPECIAL meeting of the A.A.L. Council was held at Chaucer House on Wednesday, 26th July. As all assistants know by now, the Draft By-laws of the Library Association were rejected at the L.A. Annual General Meeting at Liverpool, because they involved the disappearance of the A.A.L. as a section of the Library Association. The A.A.L. Council met to receive a report from representatives who were at the meeting at Liverpool, to consider the present position, and also to receive the views of the Divisions.

Mr. James Revie, the Vice-President, submitted a statement giving a history of the proposals for amalgamation, the A.A.L. Council's decision thereon, and his considered opinion that amalgamation would be in the best interests of the profession. As members had rejected that opinion at Dagenham and at Liverpool, Mr. Revie tendered his resignation from the Vice-Presidential Chair. After a long debate, in the course of which many tributes were paid to Mr. Revie's sterling work for the Association, a motion that "Mr. Revie's resignation be accepted with regret" was put, and carried.

Similar action was taken by the Honorary Secretary of the Association, Mr. D. E. Coult, who was associated with Mr. Revie in the long negotiations on the L.A. Reorganization Committee. Mr. Coult felt that it would be in the best interests of the Association if a Secretary whole-heartedly in favour of the continuance of the A.A.L. were to take his place.

Mr. Revie and Mr. Coult have been asked to remain as co-opted members of the Council until the end of the year.

The loss of two such valuable officers of the Association will be difficult to make good. Both men have worked valiantly for the Association, and they had succeeded in removing, or amending, many of the undemocratic clauses in the proposed L.A. By-laws. It is on the crucial question of amalgamation that their views differ from the majority of the Council. Thus these resignations arise on a matter of principle; the Council feel their loss, but realize that it is essential that they must be represented by Officers who are completely in favour of the continuance of the A.A.L. The Council are determined to obey the decisive voice of the Dagenham meeting, and believe that the A.A.L., which has done such fine work in the past, will continue to do so in the future.

A full statement of the policy of the Council, together with the views of

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Mr. Revie and Mr. Coult, will appear in the next issue of the LIBRARY ASSISTANT. Mr. W. H. Phillips has been asked to act as Honorary Secretary as from 1st September.

Announcements

WE are asked to announce that classes for the Elementary and Intermediate Examinations of the Library Association will be held next session at the North-Western Polytechnic, which will be the new centre for North London. The Polytechnic is situated at the corner of Prince of Wales Road and Kentish Town Road, and can be reached in two minutes by bus from Camden Town tube station.

The time-table will be as follows :

<i>Elementary Examination :</i>		<i>Wednesday</i>
Library Administration, Classification, Cataloguing		6.30-8.30 p.m.
Literary History		8.30-9.30 p.m.
<i>Intermediate Examination :</i>		
Classification		6.30-8.0 p.m.
Cataloguing		8.0-9.30 p.m.

Enrolment will take place during the week beginning 18th September, and classes will commence on Wednesday, 27th September.

Further particulars may be obtained from the Secretary, North-Western Polytechnic, Prince of Wales Road, N.W.5.

The Croydon Polytechnic have also arranged a series of Classes for practising library assistants studying for the Library Association's Elementary and Intermediate Examinations, commencing Monday, 18th September, 1939. The time-table and lecturers are as follows :

Elementary Tuesdays 7.30 to 9.30 p.m.
Lecturer : Mr. T. E. Callander, F.L.A.

Intermediate :
Classification Mondays 7.30 to 9.30 p.m.
Lecturer : Mr. D. H. Halliday, F.L.A.

Cataloguing Thursdays 7.30 to 9.30 p.m.
Lecturer : Mr. H. A. Sharp, F.L.A.

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Courses will be completed in time for students to present themselves at the May, 1940, examination of the Library Association. Fees: Elementary 12s. 6d., Intermediate Classification 12s. 6d., Intermediate Cataloguing 12s. 6d. Enrolment cards may be obtained from the libraries, and students are asked to enrol at the Polytechnic on Tuesday, 12th September, from 7 to 9 p.m.

Mr. Horrocks's articles on "Some new books," the second of which appears in this issue, are intended as a supplement to *Recommended books*, and will bring to the notice of assistants those expensive or specialized books which are outside the scope of that publication.

It is hoped to resume the series of articles on "The American scene" in some future issue of the ASSISTANT.

Divisional affairs will in future be dealt with by Miss E. M. Exley in a monthly digest. Material should be forwarded to the Public Library, Marylebone, W.1.

Librarians will be doing the Editor, and themselves, a service, if they send material for "Valuations" direct to Mr. R. L. W. Collison, at the Public Library, Ealing, W.5. Two copies of publications would be welcomed, for inclusion in the folders of publicity material now being circulated.

Organizing Book Selection¹

W. BEST HARRIS

PURPOSEFUL book selection demands the utilization of certain machinery and the balancing and co-ordination of a number of influences. Here I will deal with only those influences and that machinery the exploitation of which is both problematical and debatable. To confine my views to a practical and readily conceivable plane, they will be illustrated by using as a specimen town one of a population of 220,000.

The first question arising is, "What relative purposes should the central and branch libraries play when selecting books for a reasonably large

¹ Based on an address given to the Devon and Cornwall Division of the A.A.L. at Newton Abbot, 29th March, 1939.

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municipal system?" The answer to this question also carries with it the answer to that asking, "What size shall our branch libraries be?" for the size of a branch library should be solely dependent on its place as a functioning expression of the principle of book selection.

For the central library then, I would select all books necessary to complete a comprehensive survey of non-fiction for lending and reference purposes. By the inclusion of only the more detailed and practical works (including text-books), it should be made quite clear to any user of the central library that here was *not* the place to come to satisfy purely superficial wants. The services of the central library would be too specialized and valuable to be wasted in attempting to satisfy the casual enquirer for "something interesting." Only that fiction should be stocked which could be considered as necessary to the study of the literary history of the appropriate periods. Incidentally, in support of this principle of book selection for the central library, all fiction and biography should be classified according to usefulness in relation to the critical and historical works of which they form the subject-matter. Thus there would be no separate sequences of fiction and biography, which are contrary to the requirements of systematic study.

This general principle of book selection for a central library has, I know, been voiced before. Certain problems, however, arise from it which must be faced and solved. The chief difficulty is that any attempt to give a specialized status to the central library will call for a careful definition of the classes of books to be added there. As an example, would it be appropriate policy to house books on model yacht building or stamp collecting or would these be considered as wants of a superficial order to be satisfied only at the branches? The answer I would suggest is that a subject should be considered worthy of treatment in the central library: (a) if it is likely to be studied in conjunction with others, or (b) if it is a subject on which the range of treatment and demand is extensive, from popular to highly technical. My reasons for these standards are that the first implies the need for a comprehensive stock, and the second requires facilities for bibliographical guidance, both of which are best obtainable at the central library.

Passing on to the branches, it may seem rather suddenly, but paradoxically it is here that the book selection for the central library is best indicated, there should be two kinds, that is, carrying two qualities and quantities of stock. Firstly, for a system for a town of about 220,000 there should be two *large* branch libraries. When I say large I would approximate at :

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Cost	£20,000
Stock	24,000
Staff	10

For these branches I would select books to suit their primary purpose; that is, the satisfaction and creation of a demand of what may be called an intermediate nature. Here readers could obtain popular works of fiction and non-fiction of a kind and of a sufficiency to enable them to obtain a substantial introduction to a large number of authors and subjects. Of necessity, therefore, these branches must duplicate a number of works already in the central library, but no attempt under present conditions of limited incomes should be made to duplicate the purpose of the central book selection. The primary purpose of the book stock should be that of stimulation, especially in the non-fiction section, rather than of satisfaction. You may ask, "Is it not the object of a library service to satisfy at all points of a service?" and I will answer, "No, the capacities of branches, both stock and staff, should be no more strained or distorted to satisfy detailed reading wants than should the elementary school be expected to provide a full curriculum for any individual student who wanted a university education."

A second group of branches would also be required, consisting of about twenty small units. By small I mean:

Cost	£1,500
Stock	6,000
Staff	3

Here again the purpose of the book selection would be that of stimulation and introduction. As the book stock of each small branch should be intended to appeal to a high percentage of the population it would have to be of a very popular nature. In the small branch alone should the sensational works be found, but this does not mean that its stock would be entirely sensational. In fact the children's section of each branch should be as comprehensive as possible. A large percentage of non-fiction chosen for these branches should be those which can be so easily read and recommended in conjunction with fiction. Such books are those by Lowell Thomas, Halliburton, etc., which may be termed as non-fiction "leads." There is no doubt that a great majority do not read books other than the type to which they are accustomed, simply because prejudice binds them to

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that of which they know. This accounts, to a degree, for the way so many readers automatically ignore the non-fiction shelves. Choose the right books and the right staff for your branches and, without thrusting any special kind of works on these readers, you can at least remove this prejudice. Uninspired staffs are, of course, fatal to such militant functioning of any library service.

This is perhaps an appropriate point at which to introduce you to the third section of my address, "*What relative parts should the librarian and staff play in the machinery of book selection?*" My answer to this question is, I suppose, blasphemous to a degree, for I would insist that the librarian of such a system as we have in mind would be almost entirely concerned with co-ordinating the book selection. His task should be that of examining recommendations of the staff and public, discriminating where necessary, balancing proposals in the light of demand, and his final assessment would be for purchase. To make my intention clear, let me say that under this system the librarian should have only that influence over the book selection which his lack of contact with the public justifies, and which the primary choice of staff and public allows. Lest this should seem to be too abnormal a repudiation of the accepted duties of a librarian, I would hasten to emphasize that the special all-round experience of a chief is fully used, without being over-used, in adjusting and organizing the primary book selection, so as to express his policy.

This principle, I know, will suggest problems to you, but before you criticize, examine the problems that it *solves*. Take that of uninspired staffs. How often do we hear of, grumble about, or are ourselves accused of being "uninspired assistants!" These poor people, I think, or I should say *we* poor people, are so frequently discouraged by the emphasis which the average system puts on the width of the gap between the duties of librarian and assistant. Although the public expect the best of the assistant, although the service demands his greatest enthusiasm, we find that he is carefully but firmly removed from any decisive contact with the selection of the very books which he should later be in a position to discuss and *justify* as additions to the library stock.

This major difficulty will remain one, in spite of the advocacy of a few librarians for staff specialization, until the librarians are prepared to divorce *themselves* from their present monopoly. Have any of you yet seen a general post advertised for a public library assistant which asked for specialized knowledge of book selection in any one class? (We might have a

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grand chorus in answer to that question !) But, until the day that that happens it is sheer fatuity to denounce assistants for their lack of specialization, for what assistant is going to specialize in a subject as part of his professional training when he knows that while he remains an assistant his knowledge will never be used to its obvious purpose. Specialization is a valuable qualification for any assistant, but recompense must be given him, and his talent must be exploited by an appropriate share in the book selection.

And now I come to the last part of this address, given to you in the question, "To what extent can and should the public directly participate in the book selection?" The majority of libraries have the means of receiving proposals from readers, either on cards or in a book provided for that purpose, but can we be content to leave their share of the book selection to the *chance* that the proposal system is brought to their notice? Indirectly, of course, we know, the public demand is responsible for the general trend of the major section of the book selection, but should not some more detailed approach be made to various sections of the community with a view to obtaining their assistance and specific expressions of their book needs? If we are to be purposeful with our book selection, if we wish to bring right home to the public that their jobs and their hobbies are being catered for at the public library, then the answer to this question is, Yes.

As an important method of approach I would suggest a comprehensive series of lists compiled on the lines adopted at Plymouth, and which the following examples will illustrate. The question of adequate provision of books on Mothercraft was under consideration, and it was decided that it would be highly useful to work in conjunction with Plymouth Maternity and Child Welfare Department. Firstly, we compiled a list of books already in the library likely to be of service, and forwarded this list to the Child Welfare Department. The list was critically examined, weeded out, and returned, together with a further list of books not in the library but recommended by the doctors as useful to mothers. The majority of the recommendations were purchased and included in a final list, numbers of copies of which were forwarded to the Child Welfare Department, which undertook to distribute them to mothers using their centres. The libraries also distributed a number of copies in conjunction with a book display and poster.

A second example is that of co-operation with the Scout movement. In this similar case 200 copies of a lengthy list of books covering the various Scout "badges" were partly paid for and entirely distributed by

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the Plymouth branch of the Scout movement. Every Scoutmaster in the area had his copy, and the service drew not only local but national attention. These lists are compiled with the assistance of experts in their subjects, they are arranged according to their utility to possible readers, and above all they have resulted in substantial use by new and established readers. In this fashion the book selection is directly associated with sources of demand. The publicity resulting is of especial value, as it is largely inspired by *intended recipients* of the service thus advertised, some of whom perhaps have never used the library service before. I mention two instances so varied in subject-matter to illustrate how the co-operation of the public must be invited, not in terms of individuals so much as in terms of interests. An individual member of the public might be usefully served in this way, as an engineer and as a father; as an organist and as a model-boat builder. The lines of approach are so many and so varied; through trade unions, secondary schools, clubs, institutions, firms, associations; wherever people are grouped by interests there should be the public library service, co-operating and binding itself intrinsically to satisfy the wants of the people. This line of thought I could continue, for it proposes nothing which is impracticable, nothing which an average public library could not do, granted the desire.

I will conclude by emphasizing the need for orientating our methods of book selection in the light of the proposals put forward. This address has not in any way attempted to discuss the usual theories of measurement of book demand, or the anticipation of demand. It is my belief that such factors are incidental until such time as we assistants are organized to work to our greatest capacity to interpret and satisfy existing demand. Chiefs should invite specialization from their assistants, but should also be prepared to distribute the immediate responsibilities of book selection to any of the staff offering the necessary degree of book knowledge. The staff and the readers must control book selection if the large library is to remain in active contact with the everyday wants of the public. The branch selection must be organized in conjunction with that of the central so as to establish a planned segregation of reading wants, always keeping in mind the necessity of a central library of specialist works and specialist staff. Indeed, the whole service, staff, numbers and sizes of branches, quantities and qualities of stock, should be organized to express the book-selection policy, and not, as usually happens, the book selection made to fit them.

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Some New Books

S. H. HORROCKS

Sir William Beveridge. Prices and wages in England from the twelfth to the nineteenth century. Vol. I. Price tables : mercantile era. Longmans. 31s. 6d.

The author has gone further back than Thorold Rogers ; has put in what Rogers left out ; and, having more sources, has corrected his errors. A source book for economic and social history second to none.

Adam Carse. Musical wind instruments : a history of the wind instruments used in European orchestras and wind-bands from the latter Middle Ages up to the present time. Macmillan. 25s.

The compilation is a remarkable one, with hundreds of photographic illustrations and a bibliography.

Frank P. Chambers. The War behind the war, 1914-1918 : a history of the political and civilian fronts. Faber. 16s.

Munition work, food crises, ministerial and military government, shipping, and those twin evils, disease and famine, provide the background for a history of the War from a new angle. O ! happy the country with no history.

Walter Clark. Photography by infra-red. Chapman & Hall. 25s.

"Distance no object" the charabanc advertisement goes, and so it is with infra-red. The rays pierce mist, and photography may be undertaken, even by amateurs, outdoors in foggy weather, indoors in total darkness. This is the first comprehensive work on the subject.

Sir John Cumming, Ed. Revealing India's past : a co-operative record of archaeological conservation and exploration in India and beyond. The India Society. 25s.

Covers India, Indian Tibet, Chinese Turkistan, and Burma. The records expose a bewildering variety of civilization and cultures, and traces, as well as illustrates, monuments, buildings, inscriptions, and buried treasures.

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John Dewey. *Logic : the theory of inquiry.* Allen & Unwin. 18s.

Professor Dewey holds an honoured place among the world's scientific thinkers : for forty years or more he has urged the logic of scientific method. This book, a final summing up of his philosophy, displays constructive thinking in the true sense of the term, and is one of the most important books of logic published in the long line from Aristotle to Dewey.

Marjorie Plant. *The English book trade : an economic history of the making and sale of books.* Allen & Unwin. 16s.

The introduction links the MS. with the printed volume, and the story of book-making, as well as paper-making, copyright, terms of publication, etc., is carried through four-and-a-half centuries.



Valuations

R. L. W. COLLISON

MATERIAL received this month has been of a very high standard : new types have been used, the book selection has been good, and the duplicated bulletins have been clean, well set out, and often well illustrated. *Luton's* "Technical bulletin," a duplicated pamphlet of twelve pages, has a well-designed cover, and the contents are a good example of what an excellent selection of books the modern medium-sized public library can offer the business man and specialist. The annotations appear to come from a well-known hand, and reference and lending books on economics, retailing, and many branches of engineering are pleasantly mingled. *Rugby's* duplicated list on the Small House, issued in conjunction with an R.I.B.A. exhibition in the local art gallery, is suitably produced on a pleasant grey paper and includes such books as the *Architect's journal library of planned information* and Tipping's *English homes*.

Hornsey's list on A.R.P. is unappetisingly arranged on two foolscap sheets, but the formidable list of works on air and chemical warfare and on protection is comprehensive and includes such items as the Silicate Paint Company's *Camouflage and aerial defence*. A notable omission is Prentiss on *Chemical warfare*, an American book which has a remarkable chapter justifying the use of poison gas.

In connexion with the L.A. Conference *Liverpool* has issued a well-illustrated guide to its many libraries, an epitome in fact of the development

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of any large system from the first converted house through the "public-house" period to the latest temporary branches in small semi-detached houses. *The County libraries section's* latest lists on Tudor and Stuart Britain and on The Face of England and Wales are pleasing, and the second charmingly illustrated with woodcuts from Jackson's *From track to highway*, but the continued use of Gill Sans is monotonous and harsh and a less challenging type might well enhance future lists. Of all the Gardening lists of this spring *Derbyshire* has perhaps produced the most charming: a vivid green on a lemon-yellow page, an amusing cover decoration, and a skilful use of serif and sans-serif types, give it a distinction which one usually expects only in the best publishers' announcements. *Colchester* issued a fine Gardening list with a woodcut which looks as though it might be a John Nash and some apt and amusing quotations from Middleton. "Outdoor sports" from the same library is attractive but lacks the distinction of the previous publication.

Kent has responded to my invitation: from *Petts Wood Branch* Mr. Sharr sends an individual variety of bulletin with an informal note on the cover of each issue which must make the borrower appreciate something of the intimate service which can be offered by the modern branch. *Orpington Branch* issued a brief but good introduction to the library service which, however, might well be done for the whole county rather than be left to the otherwise welcome initiative of the branch librarian. The Annual report of the *Hornchurch* branch of Essex County may prove a surprise to many municipal librarians: the population of 90,000 is served by a stock of 28,000, and a staff of eleven, the area of 20,000 acres being administered by five branches. Issues amount to 423,000 and readers to 23,000, and it can thus be seen that county branches are now performing a service which cannot under any circumstances be termed negligible. Mr. Berriman is to be congratulated on a very readable and able summary of a year's work under extremely trying conditions.

Four libraries claim one's admiration for their bulletins; *Tottenham* for its gay summer number in traditional green and yellow, *Paddington* for two delightful typographical experiments, *Birkenhead* for a workmanlike list of good books whose printing and layout could perhaps be improved, and *Hendon* for the latest issue of the "Magic casement," which is still the best children's bulletin I have seen. *Hinckley* has somehow managed to duplicate a two-colour list on "Civilization and the crossroads," but I am no sure that its lavish use of italics is an advantage. *Blyth* sends a first-rate

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random selection of reading for summer days which includes most of the activities associated with fine weather, but *Burton-upon-Trent's* "Summer sports" has a rather dull cover and its typing, while neat and clean, is unimaginative and lacking in persuasion to read.

Eight annual reports provide an interesting cross-section of librarianship to-day. Mr. Richard's last report from *Hyde* is less distinguished, typographically speaking, than we should have expected, but although issues are somewhat lower than in the peak years it is evident from the lists of books given that the quality of Hyde's reading is high. *Coventry's* American-looking report again records an amazing amount of work performed with a limited income. An expenditure of less than £4,000 on books and binding for a city of nearly a quarter of a million population is not sufficient, and the figure of 1,218,000 issues is therefore good, although eight branches and four temporary stations are obviously capable of much more, given the necessary stock. It is of great interest in this connexion to find from the report of the *West Midlands Regional Bureau* that Coventry lends only forty-one books in comparison with 556 borrowed, meaning of course not that Coventry has nothing to lend, but that it is not asked to lend. From the same report we find that Birmingham lent 6,773 books, an increase on last year and 84.54 per cent. of the total books lent through the Bureau. Apart therefore from Birmingham University, which lent 222 books, Coventry tops the list with its forty-one books, the remaining fifty-one libraries being allowed to lend only 413, a decrease of seventy-one on last year, and only 5.15 per cent. of the total. There really seems to be a strong case for permitting Birmingham Public and University Libraries to lend *all* the books and thus save even more overheads than at present. *Burton-upon-Trent* has little but an all-round increase to announce, but *Cheltenham* reports that under a joint scheme with the Gloucestershire County Library residents and students in adjacent areas are allowed to use the Cheltenham Library at a cost of 3s. 6d. per reader, this being defrayed by the county. From this it would appear that Cheltenham does not allow people who work or study in the town to borrow free of charge, but on the other hand the subscription of 5s. per annum for those borrowers who do not qualify under the county arrangement is low. *Hereford County's* report is not well printed but it contains a record of very good work in a county which is not easily served. Twenty-five per cent. of the population are borrowers—surely a record for any county—and issues have amounted to 416,000 from a population of approximately 80,000. Increases in borrowers and issues are ascribed

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entirely to the opening of two regional branches at Bromyard and Ledbury, and with the exception of Leominster there is now a regional branch in operation in every market town in the county. At Bromyard 48 per cent. of the total population of 1,570 are members, but this figure is not equalled at Ledbury. The county maintains a regional branch in Hereford itself—an autonomous area—to serve the surrounding countryside, but the branch is badly situated with regard to shops and buses. Unfortunately no financial or statistical statement is given: it would indeed be interesting to know the number of staff and the amount spent on books—both assuredly inadequate but both well administered. *Burnley* will long be remembered as the authority which has power to charge for its travelling library service and thus to challenge the “tuppenny” libraries on their own ground: income from this source is actually very small—£130—and does not quite cover the cost of running the van, let alone that of the books themselves. Among the long list of periodicals at the end of the report it is interesting to note *Reynolds news*, *Die woche*, *Vogue*, and *Jeunesse Parisienne*—all, for one reason or another, rare names on public library lists. Issues have increased by 32,000 volumes and issues from the Massey Music Library totalled 12,211, which prove the value of a special department and adequate attention for a subject which cannot be dealt with in quite the same manner as books.

Chelmsford has abolished the familiar half-tone of its charming library in favour of a bold and attractive cover of grey with Gill Sans lettering in brown, the whole being designed somewhat after the style of the cover of the A.A.L.'s latest annual report, which was printed in Times Roman. Within, the report is neatly printed with almost excessive margins. Issues have increased by nearly 10,000 and there is now a membership of 35 per cent. of the population. This town has a convenient method of direct interloaning with the county headquarters and 188 volumes were thus lent immediately, thus avoiding loss of time, expenditure on postage, and unnecessary work at the S.E.R.L.B.

Chelmsford's exhibition of Essex artists is overshadowed by *Birkenhead's* proud announcement of an exhibition of Sir William Rothenstein's Paintings of fifty years. *Hove* has likewise caught the attention of the public with an exhibition of Czecho-Slovakian Water Colours, and its invitation card in red on powder blue is in the best of taste. From *Monotype Corporation* comes an attractive News Letter, full of specimens of good types, and further copies may be obtained from the Corporation's offices at 43-44, Fetter Lane, London, E.C.4.

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The latest lists from Enoch Pratt Library, *Baltimore*, include Motion-picture arts, Contemporary music, Japanese art, In the water, and Understanding the arts, each of which is printed in charming contrasting colours; the selection of illustrations to decorate the covers has improved by now to a magnificent standard. In connexion with the issue of this remarkable series of co-operative lists, which has included some of the finest work produced either in England or America, the following notes from a letter from Mr. Joseph L. Wheeler, Librarian of Enoch Pratt, are worthy of consideration:

"This library is extremely fortunate in having a small print shop of its own, and even more so in having available, during the last five or six years, a number of 'unemployed relief workers'—that is, men who have not been able to get positions in regular industry. This will explain the great variety of lists which we issue, and which otherwise would be either an extravagance or impossible.

"Would they be an extravagance? That is one of the interesting questions in library development at the present time. How far should libraries go in helping readers by lending the expert book knowledge of their staffs, and, in fact, developing that knowledge through the preparation of these lists, and helping and encouraging readers to choose the very best titles? Much could be said for it. It may be a good thing for us to look upon this as a desirable goal which we would all like to approach if we could afford it. To do what we are doing here now, out of our own budget, could not be justified, however, as from a careful survey we have found that 15 or 20 per cent. of the people who come to our Central and Branch Libraries fail to get what they ask for. Our first duty is to them, we feel."

N.B.—All future material should be addressed to me at the Central Public Library, Walpole Park, Ealing, W.5.

The Divisions

THIS is a questioning age. We say "Why," "What for," and "How" many times each day, about small things and about more important matters. Features of THE LIBRARY ASSISTANT are not immune from such enquiry, not even such well-established features as Reports from the Divisions. In the past these reports have served a two-fold purpose. They have provided a useful record of the activities of each Division. They have also enabled assistants not present at the meetings to participate to some slight degree in the benefits of these meetings by

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giving an account of the papers read, or the speeches made. It has now been decided to concentrate on this latter function, and where it is not possible to print papers as a whole, to give a digest of the topics discussed. The list of each Division's activities during the year always appears in the Annual Report, so that full details each month for record purposes are unnecessary. Meetings which are joint efforts of Library Association Branches and A.A.L. Divisions are usually fully reported in the *Library association record* and so will not appear in the ASSISTANT also.

Reports have been received from the Eastern, Devon and Cornwall, Greater London, Midland, North-Eastern, Wessex, and Yorkshire Divisions. The meeting of the Eastern Division at Norwich on 25th May consisted of three short papers by members of the Ipswich staff. Miss Vardenberg spoke on Reference Library problems, Miss Spencer lightened the end of the evening by an amusing paper called "The Patience of Job," but it would be well for all assistants to take to heart some of the remarks made by Miss Hooper in her paper on "The Examination problem." After a few remarks on examinations in general, Miss Hooper devoted her paper to impressing on the student the necessity for "single-mindedness" during the years when examinations occupy so much of the horizon. She advocated the maximum of time for study and only a reasonable minimum for recreation, "study" to be taken to include not merely reading of the prescribed text-books, but the visiting of other libraries, keeping eyes and ears open to supplement by all practical means the theoretical knowledge acquired from books. She was insistent on the desirability of knowing one text-book thoroughly rather than bewildering the mind by dipping into many on the recommended list.

The May meeting of the Yorkshire Division was held in the recently extended and reorganized York library. The paper given by Mr. German, Deputy City Librarian of York, on "University libraries and unity," draws attention to a problem which has been somewhat neglected. Mr. German made a plea for closer union amongst members of a profession already isolated from ordinary social activities and contacts and suggested that it would be of benefit both to the university assistants themselves and to public library assistants if university assistants were to join the Library Association and attach themselves to the local Division of the A.A.L. The discussion brought out very clearly the two schools of thought—those who feel that public librarianship and university librarianship are as the poles asunder, and those who realize that each section can learn much from the other. In this connexion it is instructive to recall that when the

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question of interchange of assistants was being discussed at the Folkestone Conference of the London and Home Counties Branch last year, Mr. Wilks, Chairman of the Branch and Librarian of University College, suggested that while an interchange between assistants in different libraries was beneficial, an interchange between assistants in different types of libraries might prove still more beneficial.

The Devon and Cornwall Division held their June meeting at Barnstaple on a Sunday, thus ensuring that 50 per cent. of a scattered membership could be present. Members inspected the North Devon Athenæum and the County Branch Library, and then listened to their first "magazine" evening. Short papers were given by assistants from the city libraries of Exeter and Plymouth and from county branches. Some were humorous, such as Exhibition Oddities, and the description of the life of that Jack-of-all-trades, the County Branch Librarian. Some were general, such as the opening paper which dealt with the necessity for educating the public in the full benefit to be derived from the library service, and some specific, such as display as a stimulant to subject reading. Once more also we met this question of fines, their necessity, their abolishment, and the lack of standardization in fining systems.

The Wessex Division seem to have decided to concern themselves less with technicalities and more with literary matter. Their May meeting held at Eastleigh, was addressed by Mr. C. F. Carr, Assistant Editor of the *Southern daily echo*, on the subject of "The Press and the public." Mr. Carr answered some of the criticisms of the Press, dealing particularly with crime and divorce reports, the truthfulness of the news printed, the freedom of the Press, and the necessity and value of advertisements. Their July meeting, held at Bournemouth, was addressed by Mr. H. Pepin, a member of that Staff, on "Literary associations of Bournemouth." It is pleasant to reflect that Galsworthy's schooldays and John Keble's old age were passed in this town; that Shelley and Paul Verlaine both lived there; that Gladstone and Beaconsfield stayed there and that Stevenson wrote *Kidnapped* and *Dr. Jekyll*, inspired by its sea breezes. And if this knowledge leads us to read again the works of these writers that is better still.

E. M. E.

The Library Assistant Students' Problems

D. H. HALLIDAY

POSTSCRIPT TO THE MAY EXAMINATIONS

WE have given little attention in these pages to the problems of the students of the Final section of the syllabus. For this there are obvious reasons. Firstly, the weight of demand and the breadth of interest lies with the Elementary and Intermediate students, who outnumber the Final students to the proportion of seven to one. Secondly, it is the younger student who stands in most need of guidance. In their experience and hard-won progress, Final students may be presumed to have learnt how to ferret their way out of individual difficulties.

This occasion provides an exception. The recent Final examinations contained some points of more general interest which deserve explanation:

ENGLISH LITERARY HISTORY: *Second paper*, Q. 1.—“What evidence of the beginning of a Romantic Revival in literature is apparent before the publication of *Lyrical ballads* in 1798?”

Enquiring about the above question, a candidate writes: “Immediately the student is faced with a choice. Shall he answer the question (as it should be answered) by starting with James Thomson 1700–1748, continuing with Gray, Collins, Young, Goldsmith, Percy’s *Reliques*, etc., or merely confine himself to the period he is being examined on, namely 1785–1835? This will mean dealing with 1785–1798, mentioning Burns, Blake, Cowper (perhaps), and Bowles. It seems that this vague type of question has been apparent in the last three or four papers, and I think attention should be drawn to it.”

Mr. F. Seymour Smith has answered this: “I don’t think the question can fairly be described as ‘vague,’ and would like to suggest to all students that they should not be too pernickety about these matters. In my opinion, there is no such choice for the student. The question is quite unambiguous, and if it was well answered by allusion to evidences noticeable between the great days of Pope’s supremacy and 1798, the examiners must have undoubtedly been satisfied. This would mean beginning with Thomson, Collins, and Percy, and leading up to Blake, not forgetting to mention on the way (with merit in view), Gilpin’s *Tours*. To answer the question by commencing at 1785 would be to make difficulties and would tend towards pedantry; students should not look for the former, for L.A. examiners usually avoid the latter. The Special Period being that of the Romantic

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Revival, such a question may be regarded as a perfectly fair rider on the general theme."

ADVANCED LIBRARY ADMINISTRATION: *Second paper, Q. 1.*—"What are the principal acts in the subsidiary legislation relating to public libraries in England and Wales? Summarize the points dealt with in the relevant section." In response to an enquiry about this question, Mr. K. C. Harrison (Hyde) writes: "More than one student seems to have had trouble with the phrase 'subsidiary legislation.' This phrase does not mean Library Acts other than the Principal Act of 1892, as many students seem to have thought. 'Subsidiary legislation' in this sense refers to Acts which deal not primarily with public libraries but with municipal corporations and departments generally. Some of the principal Acts in the subsidiary legislation of public libraries are the Public Health Act, 1875, the District Auditors Act, 1879, the Municipal Corporations Act, 1882, and the Local Government Act, 1933. Mention of these and a few more similar Acts, together with a brief account of their provisions, would have been an ample answer to this question. In my opinion, the term 'subsidiary legislation' is quite clear and is fairly used. It is, after all, used in the text-books of library law."

Question 7 of the same paper also troubled candidates, who did not understand the significance of branch libraries which were not to be opened for five years. The question stated: "Assume that you have been appointed as a Chief Librarian of a suburban district in which a new Central Library will be opened in one year's time, and where two branch libraries will be opened in five years' time. In these circumstances, how would you organize the work of book selection, purchase, accessioning, and cataloguing?" Mr. Harrison, commenting on this difficulty, says: "This resolves itself into a question of centralization or decentralization as regards the organization of work. For the first five years this question will not arise, but after that time there will be a total of three libraries and the question of central control or decentralization must be settled. As this library system would obviously be only of medium size, central control would prove more economical, and the wise librarian would from the outset plan his work on centralized lines."

"By centralization we understand the policy of bringing all administrative work under one control and at one centre, and dividing work among staff in such a way that a specialist group or individual performs one task for the whole system. The chief advantages of centralization are economy

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of effect, and consistency of policy and method. It is my view that in the library system cited in the question, accessioning and cataloguing, and perhaps book selection, should be organized centrally. Central accessioning means simpler records; central cataloguing gives uniformity of practice and economy of effort, and is, of course, essential if it is desired to provide each branch with a union catalogue. The presence of a union catalogue at a branch library probably improves the service to branch readers about 50 per cent., and as a union catalogue can be easily and neatly duplicated on slips by the Ormig process (described by Mr. Sharp in his book on cataloguing) there is every reason for the adoption of this idea for a new library system.

"These remarks also apply to Question 8 on the same paper."



Our Library

The Library and the community, by L. Stanley Jast. Nelson. 2s. Discussion Books No. 50.

IT is not an easy task to reduce the essentials of one's job into terms simple enough for lay consumption, especially when one's job is librarianship. The newspaper business, the medical profession, and other groups of workers have been popularized by cinematograph films and three-and-sixpenny novels, but they have lost some standing in the process. Not for the first time, however, librarians are lucky to have Mr. Jast. His avowed intention in this book is to give the general reader a broad outline of the library service. Writing with vigour and dignity, he succeeds, not only in fulfilling his purpose, but also in providing his professional readers with a challenging discussion book.

For there is no disputing that although he is ostensibly writing for the general reader, Mr. Jast has an entirely unapologetic eye upon the reactions of the professional reader. Thus, upon controversial affairs such as display, newsrooms, divisional organization, and the rest, he makes his assertions with characteristic Jastian strength. He dislikes, and tells us so, the tendency towards arty furniture which transforms a library into something like a Mayfair flat. He questions the utility and ethics of display, and makes no effort to conceal his opposition to such commercial tactics. He examines the case for and against the divisional organization common in large American libraries and advocated here by Mr. Savage, and finally declares against the idea. "Specialization of the library," he maintains, "means specializing the reader too," and he claims that it is wrong to label readers

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and herd them into fenced-off departments from which there is no escape. I wonder how far this is true? Surely if the system is properly organized *there are no fences*, and consequently the general reader has nothing to lose, while the purposive reader gains by the services of a staff specially trained in the use of the books of their department. Mr. Jast is on surer ground when he touches upon the psychological factor of likely warring interests between departmental staffs. Here is a possible danger of the scheme. It would be interesting to hear if American librarians have found this to be a vital practical disadvantage.

It would be unfair to Mr. Jast to represent him as a universal wet-blanket. On the contrary, for every occasion he opposes, full fifty times he proposes. Of special interest to the professional reader will be his debunking of the wide connotation of extension work. He is quite right in ridiculing the inclusion of such essentials as attractive buildings, well-lit rooms, printed book-lists in a definition of extension work.

As for professional examinations, Mr. Jast will not be satisfied until there is a truly practical examination set in a reference library, where candidates will have to use common sense instead of a psittacine memory. Not a new idea, but one deserving of trial.

The book is illustrated, but not as well as it might be. There are the usual views of the Manchester Central Library, while branch libraries are represented by photographs of Liverpool's Henry A. Cole Library and Dagenham's Becontree Branch. Tottenham Lending Library, with its highish radiating stacks and arched roof, is not a good example of a modern lending library, and could well have been replaced. Worst of all, in the chapter on co-operation, appears that wretched and ubiquitous map of the English Regional Library Systems. One dark night I shall get up and search for that block and destroy it!

But all this is unimportant. What really matters is that Mr. Jast has done the profession a service and is worthy of appointment as our public relations ambassador-at-large. He has an enviable style of writing, sometimes incisive, always idiomatic, and if he cannot persuade the community that libraries are *not* luxuries then no one ever will.

K. C. H.

Subject classification, by James Duff Brown. 3rd edition, revised and enlarged by James D. Stewart. 1939. 565 pp. Grafton. 30s.

"The present edition," states Mr. J. D. Stewart in his preface, "has been extensively revised and enlarged." With this claim, the Bourne-

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mouth reforms, and the Bethnal Green extended notation in mind, one might be led to expect a substantially new Subject Classification. Despite the lapse of twenty-five years of momentous change, this has not been the case. Much of the 1906 "Brown" remains, and the index registers only some 18,000 entries as against over 16,000 in the first edition. The use of a fourth figure in the notation has been avoided throughout and new topics have been largely accommodated at gaps in the sequence. Sometimes these gaps have been happily placed (as in the case of A 750 Photography, B 570 Motor Cars, C 315 Sound Recording and Reproducing, and M 900 Library History and Economy). At other times new knowledge has had to gain painful inches through lack of provision. Thus, Radio Communication has but three places at B 637-9 (Microphones, Amplifiers, and Loud Speakers are placed at C 340, 343, 347). The Categorical Tables (now added to in five cases) can scarcely be expected to provide the necessary subdivision, and one could wish, once more, that they had been sensibly modified and reduced. As it is, Aero-engines appear at D 268.166, Commercial correspondence at L 800.968, and the present Sino-Japanese War at P 429.222.

Few modern subjects have been omitted, even if they have been accorded bare breathing-space. There are places, for example, for Film Music, A.R.P., Infra-red Photography, and Mechanized Accounts; but not for Jazz, Social Psychology, the Chaco War, Synthetic Manufactures, and Minorities. The changing map of Europe must have caused Mr. Stewart some anguish, although, short of a complete overhaul, he has wisely made the best of both worlds, the pre- and post-War. S 078, Baltic States, is a good example of the re-arrangement. Other adjustments occur at I 400, Textile Manufactures, and L 221, where some useless headings have been scrapped in favour of new forms of government (Totalitarianism, Fascism, Nazism. . .). Yet surely Psychology deserves more than twenty-one places in the 1939 edition of a scheme, especially when on the very opposite page eighty places are allotted to the various Passions, Vices, and Virtues? Anomalies such as these should not be passed over in a revision.

One notes with pleasure the simplification of certain headings. "Chung Kwoh (Chinese Empire, Middle Kingdom)" now appears simply as China, and "Osmanli Vilaieti (Turkish or Ottoman Empire)" as Turkey. In the format of the book, too, there is a considerable advance. The schedules are printed in single columns with an ample right margin for notes. Typography has improved, greater play being given to Clarendon, upper-case letters, and indentation.

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The student of classification will find a lengthy perusal of the new Subject Classification most advisable, and a close comparison with its predecessors imperative.

A. J. W.

A History of cataloguing and cataloguing methods 1100-1850. (Thesis accepted for Honours Diploma of the Library Association.) By Dorothy May Norris. Grafton. 10s. 6d.

The author has brought together extracts from a number of early library catalogues and accompanied them with descriptive notes and comments. These in turn are linked up, century by century, with paragraphs discussing the cataloguing methods of each period. There is little attempt at comparative treatment because, as the author says, the history of cataloguing shows no gradual increase in efficiency, the ancients being as proficient in the art as we are to-day. Nevertheless, there has been considerable development owing to changes in the output and collection of books, and to other causes, and the interest of the book to librarians would have been greatly increased had this aspect of the survey been more fully developed. As it stands, the book is not likely to appeal to students for the Library Association examinations, though the chapters on the Bodleian and British Museum catalogues form a very useful summary.

F. McD.

Library staffs, by L. R. McColvin. (Practical Library Handbooks.) Allen & Unwin. 5s.

Very early in the book the author states his main case—the division of staff into professional and non-professional grades on the contention that 80-90 per cent. of the jobs carried out in a public library require no greater qualifications or knowledge than might be expected from competent clerks. On the other hand, he holds that both grades should be recruited from the same types of candidate. This, he says, should not mean a lowering of standards for recruitment, but rather the attraction of applicants possessing higher qualifications than those ordinarily sought. Mr. McColvin suggests that the young entrant, instead of plunging immediately into professional studies, should be encouraged to concentrate on the more general subjects, economics, geography, languages, etc., during the first three or four years of his career until his ability for one grade or the other could be assessed with some accuracy. Unfortunately the continuance of

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generally low commencing salaries coupled with the dependence for promotion on the possession of professional qualifications is unlikely to commend this course to young entrants.

Mr. McColvin acknowledges the present unsatisfactory nature of the Examination Syllabus, and reviews the facilities for training, which are inadequate. Throughout the book he is contrasting facilities here and in America, where, it must be acknowledged, they are far more thorough. "Many of our needs," he says, "would be met if we had (a) three or four full-time professional schools, (b) a number of training centres for non-professional and intermediate students, (c) one school where teachers of librarianship were trained, and (d) facilities for advanced work." Full-time attendance at a recognized training school for a short time would achieve far more than years of part-time study, and local authorities should be encouraged to allow staff facilities for this.

Mr. McColvin has a good deal to say on the formulation of criteria of staffing, but he skates somewhat uncertainly over salaries and grading schemes. His views on the employment of women are unlikely to pass unnoticed. His conclusion is both sound and important—that until we convince the public that we really are doing work that does entail a higher standard of ability and qualification than ordinary clerking, we shall not achieve the improvements we are seeking. That is true, yet there are to-day plenty of cases in which staffing conditions are still far below the standards which the small degree of recognition we have already achieved warrants.

Mr. McColvin set out to write a provocative book and has certainly done so. It is discursive in parts, though this is an inevitable fault in a book which is not a "practical library handbook" so much as a "discussion" book, and if the book does no more than to initiate discussion of the many points raised it will have served a useful purpose. The suggestions made for the improvement of training facilities should not be dismissed as ideals. They can, and, the reviewer believes, will be achieved.

D. E. C.

The Library Assistant

Correspondence

THE SCOTTISH CENTRAL LIBRARY,
DUNFERMLINE, FIFE.

16th July, 1939.

TO THE EDITOR,
THE LIBRARY ASSISTANT.

SIR,—

Mr. Halliday and Mr. Walford are to be thanked for giving their answer to a question that must perplex many candidates in the Intermediate Classification exam., but I would like to enquire how far their answer is officially correct. Mr. Halliday emphasizes "the vital fact that the examples have to be classified from the information given in the paper," and Mr. Walford adds "that the data furnished by the examiners is (*sic*) to be treated on its own merits."

It seems to me, however, that in this practical paper, which is at the best an inadequate test in book classification (for do not all our text-books repeatedly warn *against* classifying from publishers' announcements, blurbs on dust-covers, etc., and urge the importance of working with the books themselves?), the examiners deliberately choose recent important books so that the more alert candidates can supplement the information given them in the annotation by their memories of reviews (comparable to Dewey's advice to seek the opinion of specialists) and in several cases perhaps by their actual experience of the books themselves. I certainly feel the examiners do not expect a candidate to refuse to make use of any first-hand experience of the books he may have. Mr. Walford apparently would permit him to note "that the author is so and so, whose outlook is . . ."; and he practises what he preaches, for he "remembers" that Lord Stamp is an economist (and is he not also a Christian?). But if the candidate is allowed to use previously acquired information about the authors, why should he be discouraged from availing himself of any facts he may know about the books in question?

Further, if the candidate is really expected to treat on their own merits the data furnished by the examiners, it is fair to ask that the annotation be more carefully and accurately done. In May's paper the annotation to Engel and Kahn is scarcely in English ("highlighting," "merchandising"); the note on Frankfort's book is rather illogical ("Usages are illustrated, and religious beliefs find expression there"); and in the first annotation the

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leading sentence (which Mr. Walford sets such store by), "A sketch of the historical development of science in this country . . .," is taken from the publisher's *advance* announcement of the book, and differs widely from their estimate after the book had been published. Still, we are assured "the vital data are provided."

In fine, if candidates are to classify the examples from the information given in the paper, it might be found better to concoct imaginary authors, titles, and annotations, that the more wide-awake candidates might not be hampered through having more to forget. The only sensible alternative is to encourage the candidates to bring the widest possible range of interests and knowledge to bear on their decisions, and to hope they use their knowledge wisely.

Yours faithfully,
W. R. AITKEN.

TYNEMOUTH PUBLIC LIBRARY,
NORTH SHIELDS.

SIR,—

I read, with mixed feelings, Mr. R. L. W. Collison's article on "Annotation for the student." In the first place, I cannot convince myself that annotation now contains complexities which can never be satisfactorily solved, as a result of Mr. Snaith's "brilliant" onslaught. Instead of sponsoring evaluative annotation I rather think Mr. Snaith inaugurated "annotative evaluation"—quite a different thing.

Regarding the quoting of qualifications in an annotation, while they may not be a *guarantee*, they are at least a guide. It is comforting to know that your cataloguing tutor is an Honours Diplomat of the Library Association, and, in the same way, it is only natural for a reader to expect more, for example, from a person writing on theology who is a Doctor of Divinity, than from a minister possessing only the minimum qualifications. To carry the case a little further, would not such a minister himself wish to read his colleague's work?

While the Bethnal Green method may be safely defined as introduction, evaluation, and enthusiasm, it is not by any means so safe to predict its effect upon users of a library. "A book has been added to the library; it is assumed to be worth while and everything must be done to encourage as many borrowers as possible to read it." We may, I think, further assume that *every* addition to the library is so treated. If I were a user of that cata-

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logue I should be inclined to become satiated with enthusiasm after a while. In fact, I think I should react much in the same way as I do when I am told by enthusiastic film producers that every film is stupendous, colossal, a super-epic, the hit of the century, and so on.

Far from this method arousing a "certain conscious or sub-conscious snob-appeal which suggests the borrower should have read the book long ago, or that he will be much improved in mind and body for having done so," I should say the boot will be on the other foot and he will come to the conclusion that he is being served by a staff which condescendingly looks down on him from some Olympian height. *Must* we try to force our books on people? Does it not rather suggest that we are trying to over-convince ourselves that our theory of book selection is the right one after all.

While agreeing that much-advertised goods tend to be better, I am not at all sure that the Bethnal Green method is suitable even for the bulletin and book list. Here again I think the remarks re films are apposite. Also, and I know this is a much hackneyed statement, is even the most modern librarian qualified to pass an evaluative comment on *every* book? Surely not! And if he seeks outside help is he not tending to prove that a librarian is unable to do the whole of his job? Or perhaps after all evaluative annotation is *not* an essential part of his task. Personally, I incline to the view that it is the sole sphere of publishers' writers. In which case, I would advise students to forget the Bethnal Green myth that "on the day on which a discrimination evaluation is adopted in English libraries . . . the catalogues will become our most subtle and effective instrument, not only our guide to books, but a schedule of their worth; not only an appendage to literature, but an education in itself," and concentrate on the Croydon-Savage methods which, after all, are what are needed for examination purposes.

Yours faithfully,

RONALD DAIVSON.

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